

## Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



James H. Quillen  
VA Medical Center  
Facilities Management Services  
Mountain Home, TN 37684  
423-926-1171  
[www.va.gov/621quillen](http://www.va.gov/621quillen)



### Asbestos Removal Assures Clean Air

#### The Member

James H. Quillen VA Medical Center is a tertiary care facility providing a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research. Comprehensive health care is provided through primary care, tertiary care, and long-term care in areas of medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and extended care. In addition to providing acute care, the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center offers geriatric and rehabilitation services through its 120-bed Nursing Home Care Unit. The facility also operates a 348-bed Domiciliary that offers a variety of treatment options, which includes a Homeless Inpatient Treatment Program and Homeless Outreach. James H. Quillen VA Medical Center has an active affiliation with the James H. Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University. The medical school is housed on the grounds of the VA Medical Center and is utilizing the property through Enhanced-Use Leasing agreement. Over 300 University residents, interns, and students are trained at the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center each year. There are also nursing student affiliations with East Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee, Vanderbilt University and five other nursing schools. There are other major university affiliations with our medical center involving dentistry, pharmacy, social work, and psychology. A U.S. National Cemetery is also located on the grounds of the VA.

#### The Story

The Green Environmental Management Team for the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center takes a proactive approach to identify opportunities for creating a safe environment for both employees and the public. They selected

and prioritized an asbestos abatement project in 2005 on two 100-year-old buildings at the station. Occupants of a building are not exposed as long as the asbestos-containing materials are not damaged; however, due to the condition of these buildings, the Green Environmental Management Team determined a potential for exposure. The condition of asbestos-containing material deteriorates over time, allowing the asbestos fibers to become airborne. In an effort to be good environmental stewards ahead of any true exposure, the Medical Center targeted these buildings for this project.

#### The Success

Past studies of a high level exposure by asbestos workers and laboratory animals has shown that asbestos is hazardous. Since the risks associated with low level, non-occupational exposure are not well established, the Environmental Protection Agency concludes that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibers. If not removed and properly disposed, exposure to asbestos can result in diseases of the lungs, including asbestosis, mesothelioma and cancer. This project negated risk of exposure to asbestos in patients and staff at the Medical Center.

#### The Pollution Prevented

Through the use of a licensed and certified VA contractor, the Medical Center removed and double wrapped 27,540 lbs of asbestos that was landfilled as a Class 9 hazardous waste. The operation posed minimal environmental hazard through the use of approved removal and disposal methods. However, if left unabated in these structures, the asbestos could have potentially become airborne, posing a risk to people in the Medical Center.

December 2005